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Ian Clayton,

Head of the International Stream and Deputy Headmaster,
French International School

What are some of the challenges being a Head?

The biggest challenge is being pulled in lots of different directions. In my role, everyone wants a piece of me. Unfortunately I can't make everyone happy and that can be a challenge.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I really enjoy developing teachers and students, having an impact on their lives. Seeing them develop and grow as people, I never forget it and neither do they.

What has been the most memorable event in your career?

Getting my first teaching job was a pretty funny and memorable experience. I didn't really want the job so I didn't put in much effort. I must have been very relaxed and confident because I got it! It was a tough school but a very rewarding role.

Did you always want to work in education?

No, I didn't. I wanted to be a professional sportsman or musician. For a while corporate life looked attractive to me. But in my final year of University, I knew teaching was for me, it was the only thing I would do.

What do you like most about Hong Kong?

Everything really, it's a magical place. If you could somehow bottle Hong Kong and sell it, you'd be a very wealthy person. It's so dramatic and the scenery is beautiful. And of course the people too - they're fantastic.

Do you have any hobbies?

I used to play a lot of sports. I spend more time now living vicariously through my children as they play sport. I do like to read and go to the cinema too.

Did you have a standout teacher when you were at school?

I had a couple of standout teachers. One I remember well is my history teacher, I became a history teacher partly because of him. He had a way with us that was great - he was interested in us but tough. He was assertive but not aggressive. Also he could take a joke and knew how to speak to big classes of kids. He was well respected by his students.

What's the best advice you were given by a teacher?

'Sit down and shut up Clayton!' Which I did.

Also, I was advised that art was not going to be my subject. The teacher told me to never pick up a paintbrush and I have followed those instructions.

What qualities do you value most in people?

Forgiveness and tolerance. These are amazing and difficult qualities to have, I don't always have them. People like Nelson Mandela are such an inspiration, it's hard to imagine you could forgive the person who has beaten you for years. That's incredible and almost a super-human quality.

Which talent would you most like to have?

I'd love to be able to play an instrument, I think going on tour would be fun.

What was your favourite subject at school?

History and lunch time. I loved playing football and cricket at lunch time.

Tell us a secret about yourself.

In an emergency, I might be able to land an airliner - if someone could talk me through it. It might be a bumpy landing! ☐